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ABSTRACT

A nation's transition from dictatorship to democracy generally involves institutional reform attempts with new priorities serving a wider range of people and goals. This study describes and compares the goals, means, and outcomes of administrative reforms in the public educational systems of three Hispanic nations (Venezuela, Colombia, and Spain). All three countries executed decentralization and regionalization reform strategies with common characteristics that either facilitated or detracted from the proposed changes. A field research methodology was used to gather data from classroom teachers and ministers of education. A decade after decentralization efforts began, Spain and Colombia had demonstrated considerable success toward achieving their goals, while Venezuela had not. There are eight principal reasons for this situation related to (1) differences in collaboration methods; (2) political party politics; (3) incremental approaches; (4) government continuity; (5) costs; (6) budget control; (7) regional boundaries; and (8) formalization of educational organization and management structures. Spain and Colombia's practice of decentralizing in stages allowed more experimentation leeway than Venezuela's "all at once" strategy, which proved difficult to integrate. Included are 44 references in Spanish and English. (MLH)

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DECENTRALIZATION AND REGIONALIZATION IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION COMPARISONS OF VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA AND SPAIN

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DECENTRALIZATION AND REGIONALIZATION IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
COMPARISONS OF VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA AND SPAIN

This study describes and compares the goals, means and outcomes of administrative reforms in the public educational systems of Venezuela, Colombia and Spain ten years after their transitions from dictatorships to democracies. The three Hispanic nations pursued distinct types of decentralization and regionalization strategies with differing results. A field research methodology was used to gather data from classroom teachers to ministers of education. The paper concludes with the identification of variables that facilitated (or detracted from) the administrative reform efforts.

DECENTRALIZATION AND REGIONALIZATION IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION: COMPARISONS OF VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA AND SPAIN

A nation's transition from dictatorship to democracy generally involves attempts at institutional reform with new priorities that serve a wider range of people and goals. The objective of this study is to describe and compare the goals, means and outcomes of administrative reforms in the public educational systems of three Hispanic nations 10 years after their transitions to democratic forms of government. Venezuela, Colombia and Spain executed reform strategies of decentralization and regionalization. With all three reform efforts there were common characteristics that either facilitated or detracted from the proposed changes. These characteristics will be pointed out at the end as a basis of theory building.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed here represents background information and a collection of analytical tools helpful in analyzing and explaining the various motives for decentralization, the forms it took, and the outcomes it produced.

Under military dictatorships, centers of power not strictly controlled (e.g., church, universities, political parties, newspapers) are usually viewed as threats to the authoritarian leadership. They tend to be constrained or suppressed, as has been documented in Venezuela (Fermin, 1975; Gilmore, 1964), Colombia (Fluharty, 1957; Payne, 1968) and Spain (Arango, 1985; Gunther, 1980).

To a dictatorship, the educational institution is often seen as a threat either indirectly through the percolation of reformist ideas, or directly through physical confrontations with angry students.

consequently, educational institutions in general and their budgets in particular do not fare well. For example, when the last Venezuelan dictator fell in 1958, approximately half the population was illiterate, the drop-out rate for elementary schools was almost 80 percent, and the major universities were closed with most of the professors either in jail or exile (Sánchez, 1963). At the time only four percent of the national budget was spent on education. However, in the years 1970-1980 when the democracy was fully established it ranged from 10 to 26 percent (Venezuela, Congreso de la República, 1979: 87).

In Spain, at approximately the time of General Franco's death, the 2.1 percent of the Gross National Product spent on education placed it last among the Western European nations. The next lowest was Italy spending 4.6 percent of its GNP. The highest was Holland with 8.5 percent (Spain. Secretaria General Tecnica, 1982:197).

With the emergence of democracy in the three Hispanic countries, there came the call for administrative reform. Administrative reform is defined by Hammergren (1983:4) as, "planned or at least premeditated, systematic change in administrative structures or processes aimed at effecting a general improvement in administration output or related characteristics."

A reform stressing decentralization frequently uses the process as a tool for national development, a form of government reorganization, or both (Conyers, 1984:187). As such the concept can be examined in terms of degree and territorial space. The degree of decentralization can be viewed on a continuum involving the transfer of decision-making authority. (1) Deconcentration involves the transfer of tasks and workload to subnational units, but no

transfer of decision-making authority. The center is thus decongested but there is no significant redistribution of authority. (2) Delegation is the transfer of decision-making authority from national to subnational levels. Delegated authority must be exercised within a policy framework established at the national level, and ultimate authority still remains at the national level.

(3) Devolution is the transfer of authority to an autonomous unit that can then act with independence. "Decentralization" refers to one or more of the above processes (Rondinelli, 1981: 137-138; Conyers, 1984).

In terms of territorial space, decentralization can be a transfer of authority to newly created or existing field offices that operate nationally; a transfer to existing regional and local units, or the transfer to newly created regional and local units (Rondinelli, 1981). The last option is sometimes used because traditional state boundaries were generally established historically by accidents of nature (e.g., rivers, mountain ranges,) and no longer reflect modern population and economic growth patterns and needs (Chen, 1973).

The outcomes of decentralization efforts have shown serious problems of implementation resulting from, for example, a wide range of intractable vested interests, inadequate planning, ingrained centrist attitudes, differences of opinion between politicians, reformers and bureaucrats, and many others (Rondenelli, Nellis and Cheema, 1984:).

The research reported here shows that various forms of decentralization and regionalization were planned and executed in the three countries, and with differing results. This paper will attempt to explain why some efforts succeeded and others did not.'

Venezuelan Reform

Problems of Centralization

When Venezuela's last dictator, General Marcos Pérez Jiménez, fled the country in 1958, over 120 years of dictatorial rule had finally ended (Lombardi, 1985). The legacy that dozens of former dictators left behind was the massed concentration of economic and government power in Caracas (Morón, 1979). Although the Constitution described the 22 states as "autonomous and equal entities," in reality they were economically and politically dependent on the central government. The national budgets were their main source of the state's revenue, and the governors were appointed by the president.

Prior to the 1968 reform the various ministries of government operated as "separate independent empires" (Levy, 1968:54) with minimal consultation and almost no coordination. Each ministry had divided up the country into administrative regions without coordinating with the other ministries. Consequently, the Ministry of Public Works had 10 regions, Communication six regions, Employment 24 regions, Education 21 regions for primary schools and 8 for secondary, and so forth.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) was also extremely centralized. All decisions involving curriculum development, textbook selection, examinations, budget formation and control, teacher training, and virtually everything else of any consequence were made in Caracas. (Venezuela. Congreso de la República, 1961). Because the Director of Personnel personally hired everyone in the educational system including all teachers, bus drivers, administrators, secretaries and even maintenance personnel, the MOE operated as a huge job bank. The hallways were usually crowded with people from all over the country

looking for jobs. It was generally assumed that at the next election, those hired would remember the political party of their benefactor.

Four major consequences of this administrative centralization were evident. (1) Inefficiency. It took from nine to 12 months for a routine request from a local school to move all the way up the hierarchy and back down with a decision. Overwhelming workloads and lack of coordination between major units within the MOE compounded the problem. (2) System Rigidity. Standardized procedures governed almost all processes at all levels. For example, the same curriculum (which went unchanged for 25 years, 1944-1969) was used in the urban and rural areas, mountains and jungles, sea coast and great plains. Teachers were not permitted to introduce their own innovations. Change could only come from the top and was agonizingly slow (Hanson, 1976). Lack of Participation. Regional and local participation by educators and citizens practically did not exist. School personnel outside the capital city typically felt abandoned, misunderstood, unsupported, and unappreciated (Gross et al., 1968, Ch. 5., p. 6)

The Reform Movement

One of the first actions of the democratic government was to establish the Comisión de Administración Publica (Public Administration Commission, or CAP). It was charged with developing a plan for national reform (Venezuela. Decree 287, June 27, 1958). However, the democratic government had to use a large measure of its energies during the next 10 years establishing itself in the face of right-wing military groups attempting to seize power (Brewer-Carías, 1976:216). The objective of the reform was to accelerate economic and social development through the regionalization and decentralization of all ministries of government. Comprehensive national and regional

planning, management efficiency, and broad-based participation were to be the keys to success (Brewer-Carias, 1975).

Regionalization resulted in Venezuela being divided into eight territories, each of which -- as much as possible -- shared common social, economic and cultural characteristics. Each region has an urban center which was to serve as the basis for developing an economic growth pole, thus slowing the historic flow of capital and skilled personnel moving to Caracas. The 20 state governments, economically weak and politically impotent, were involved in little more than a symbolic way. Two types of decentralization were planned: delegation and deconcentration. Each ministry of government was to create an office in all eight regions and delegate the authority to carry out specified tasks. The ministries would also transfer much of the workload through deconcentration. A Regional Office of Coordination and Planning (ORCOPLAN) was set up in each region to coordinate interministry planning and action initiatives.

The Ministry of Education established its Regional Educational Offices which were subdivided into zones and local school districts. Offices of planning, instruction, evaluation, and administrative services were established with well trained and experienced officials employed to manage them (Carabaño, 1971). Thus the plans for a comprehensive reform were made, but as the experience showed, planning a reform is much easier than executing it.

Reform Outcomes

Extensive and detailed plans for reform were developed by the Public Administration Commission and the Ministry of Education (de Almea, 1971), but political support remained a serious problem. Rafael Caldera of the Christian Democratic Party (COPEI) defeated

five presidential candidates in 1968 to capture the presidency, but with only 29.1 percent of the popular vote and less than 30 percent of the seats in the House and Senate.

The proposed decentralization of public administration was to be a banner of his presidency, but it was quickly rejected by the majority in Congress. The new president, therefore, executed the reform by decree (Decreto 72, 1969) in all eight regions simultaneously. The Congress declared it illegal and, through controlling the budget, refused to finance the changes. The president retaliated by taking the money provided in the official congressional budget and spending it along the lines of the newly created administrative system.

Political parties in power changed three times between 1969 and 1980 (COPEI, 1969-1974; Acción Democratica, 1974-1979; COPEI, 1979-1984). All three governments proclaimed regionalization, decentralization and modernization as national goals. However, each party wanted credit for any progress achieved. Consequently, without conducting any evaluations, each newly elected government summarily terminated the programs (and thousands of personnel) put in place by the previous government no matter how many millions of dollars and thousands of man-hours had been expended. The 1970s were the oil boom years in Venezuela, and money was considered to be no object.

Problems of development within the Ministry of Education reflected the turbulence within the public administration sector as a whole. The senior administrators were replaced with every election, and sometimes even when ministers were changed within a single political administration. Inexperienced educators who had been active in political campaigns, but had no administrative experience, were

commonly appointed to the top level. One year they could be teaching in a high school and the next year directing the entire nation's secondary school program as their first administrative post.

For the lower rank bureaucrats with job protection, decentralization was not their policy. It was merely the government's. Several Ministers, who were always outsiders to the bureaucracy, tried to overcome the reluctance to delegate authority but found themselves frustrated at every turn by a "centralist" mentality. Minister Pérez Olivares (1973.7) explained that, "From the point of view of the individual, delegation represents a loss of power, and nobody wants to lose power." Particularly devastating to the decentralization concept was the fact that regional officials were never actually delegated authority to manage budgets. Thus, they could never hire personnel without first obtaining approval from higher up.

In effect, the Ministry deconcentrated work (mostly record keeping, supervision and report writing) to regional, zone and district levels, but never delegated meaningful decision-making authority. As a consequence, ten years after the reform was initiated very little had changed. The system was still centralized, slow, rigid, insensitive and politicized. The decentralization experience had created an administrative system that was bigger, but not qualitatively better.

Colombian Reform

Unlike Venezuela, Colombia has a long history of electing its national leaders, a history dating almost to the time of national independence. However, brutal fighting between the Conservative and Liberal political parties with the elite and poor, centralists and federalists, and the Catholic church taking sides led to almost 100

civil wars and insurrections. During the last known as La Violencia, which broke out in 1948, well over 100,000 had already been killed when General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla overthrew Conservative Party President Laureano Gomez in 1953. After an oppressive and brutal dictatorship, he was forced to flee the country in 1957 in the face of a bloody student and popular uprising against him.

In Venezuela, the overthrow of a dictator brought about intense political party struggles that inhibited any chance for significant long-term administrative reform. In Colombia, the effect was just the opposite. A power-sharing agreement, called the National Front, provided for rotating the presidency every four years between the Conservative and Liberal parties and dividing the thousands of public appointments (e.g., cabinet members, governors, mayors, school principals) equally.

Because Colombia had lived under a dictatorship for less than five years, unlike Venezuela's 120 years or Spain's 40 years, the country quickly reverted to its former structure of government. Three branches of government existed with the president appointing the 22 state [department] governors. The governors, in turn, appointed their own cabinet secretaries in such areas as education, health, finance and agriculture.

Unlike Venezuela, the Colombian state governments raised a large measure of their own revenues and controlled their own state school systems. Therefore, the state governments were not nearly as dependent on the national government. In the context of decentralization, the semi-autonomous nature of the states established by the Constitution created a quasi-devolved form of government. That is, they had independent jurisdiction over some issues but not all. Spain

developed a similar model with its creation of autonomous communities.

Problems of Control

The Colombian constitution and national law establish that educational policy is to be created by the Ministry of Education and carried out by the state governments (Colombian Constitution, art. 181). Because of the agreement between parties to share power, a core of skilled professionals were retained in their jobs after changes in governments and this brought about considerable continuity at the national level. However, continuity was never a priority in the large majority of the states where untrained politicians outside the control of the Minister of Education constantly were employed as administrators throughout the educational systems.

State secretaries of education are appointed by, and are responsible to, the state governors who, in turn, report directly to the president. There is no direct link of control from the minister of education to the state secretaries. The Minister of Education, therefore, was more in the role of an advisor than a superior to the 22 state secretaries of education.

In the years leading up to the reform, flagrant and irresponsible abuses of power were commonplace in state governments. State educational officials routinely ignored Ministry policy whenever it proved convenient. Typically the secretaries of education only had a minimal idea of what the national educational policies were (Hanson, 1974).

In 1968 (when the reform began) approximately 23 percent of the public primary school teachers did not meet the minimum standards established by the ministry (Lebot, 1971:136). Governors would often hire hundreds of teachers (sometimes the day before leaving office

when no budgeted funds existed to pay their salaries. Just before elections, hundreds of people would be hired as "teachers" but would work in the community for votes and never enter a classroom.

Almost as a matter of routine, teacher salaries were delayed sometimes for months. Even after 1961 when the national government assumed paying primary schoolteacher salaries in each state, over 80 strikes were conducted during the decade for unpaid wages of over six months.

At the root of the problem was the fact that upwardly mobile politicians were typically appointed to the posts of governor and secretary of education. They were all too often quick to place the needs of the political party before the needs of the educational system. The national funds transferred to the states for paying salaries were commonly used for other, more politically visible, projects as constructing roads or public buildings. The educational budget was always the largest in each state, ranging from 40 to 75 percent of the total, and therefore a continual target for raiding.

When the states could not pay the teachers' salaries, after a few months a strike would ensue and the Ministry of Education would be forced to pay the bill in order to get the schools reopened. In short, the MOE was close to powerless in its ability to control either the resources or the direction of state educational systems. Unlike Venezuela where the problem was the extreme centralization of power, Colombia suffered from a fragmentation of power (Hammergren, 1983:158) which over the years had led to a condition of semi-anarchy in the Colombian system of education as managed by the states.

The Educational Reform

The presidency of Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966-1970) was a period

of important improvements in the Colombian system of government. Thought was given to developing regional development zones that ignored existing state boundaries, similar to the Venezuelan plan, but that was shelved for lack of local political support (Hammergren, 1983:162).

The Ministry of Education developed its own reform independent of the other ministries of government. In 1968, the Minister of Education, Octavio Arizmendi Posada, developed a creative program called Fondos Educativos Regionales (FER), or Regional Educational Funds Program (Colombia, Decree 3157). In order to make it politically acceptable, it was publicly billed as a decentralization reform through which the Ministry would set policy that would be executed at the state and local levels. In other words, a delegation of authority to the semi-autonomous (quasi-devolved) states was the announced format.

In reality, the FER program was a strategy of centralization designed to withdraw the illicit power traditionally exercised in the states and require them to follow national educational policy. This strategy has been identified in other developing countries as "decentralization as a means of recentralization" (Conyers, 1983:101; Harris, 1983:184). Increased efficiency through tighter administrative controls was an important objective. But because the principle of "states rights" was a sensitive issue, a way had to be found for the governors voluntarily to give up their traditional habit of ignoring national educational policy.

The strategy was simple and, in the long run, effective. A contract was drawn up for each governor and the Minister of Education to sign. The contract clauses stated all the requirements the

governors and secretaries of education were obliged to follow. These clauses, such as hiring only qualified teachers, only hiring teachers when money was budgeted to pay them, reorganizing state educational offices, and so forth, were a restatement of Ministry policy (Arizmendi, 1969).

State governors were not obligated to sign the contracts, but if they didn't their states would no longer continue to receive national funds to pay primary schoolteacher salaries. Also, for a governor to not sign the contract would be an open admission that national educational policy was not and would not be followed.

One clause in the contract was new and unique. Each state was obliged to receive a representative of the MOE who could evaluate, and even veto, illicit hiring or improper expenditures. All governors signed their contracts.

Even though in the early years after implementation the FER contract suffered some serious enforcement problems and was modified a number of times (Colombia. ICOLPE, 1973), it served as the foundation for a series of additional, incremental reforms (academic and administrative) that improved significantly the quality and efficiency of administrative practice. In 1968 when the reform began, thousands of teachers were going unpaid, being hired without meeting minimum employment standards, or being hired without money in the budget to pay them. However, by 1980 by and large these problems, and many others, had been eliminated. Unlike the case of Venezuela, the Ministry of Education was not just bigger, it was qualitatively better.

Significant contributions to this success were made when the two major political parties collaborated in a power-sharing agreement

preserved past expenditures by building upon existing programs as each new government took office, maintained a continuing core of qualified professionals, and incremental changes became the standard rather than throwing out the old and bringing on the new."

Spanish Reform

In 1975 Francisco Franco, "Chief of State, Generalisimo of the Army, and by the Grace of God, Caudillo [maximum leader] of Spain and of the Crusade," died after 40 years in power. As head of state, head of government, head of party and chief legislator, his power was absolute (Arango, 1978). His regime has been described as authoritarian; nationalistic, with no regional political or cultural identities permitted; and confessional, through institutionalized relationships with the Catholic Church. It was also centralist, by directly controlling all political appointments, from the local town mayors, to provincial governors, heads of ministries, presidents of the government and the legislative bodies. (Gunther, 1980:2-3). Beltrán (1987) writes that "the ideology under Franco was not concerned with modernization nor was it 'revolutionary.' Rather, it was actually an old-style reactionary oligarchical dictatorship."

Government Reform

Modern Spain is a heterogeneous composite of historic regional cultures, disjunctive socio-economic stratas, diverse languages, ancient kingdoms and distinct political philosophies cobbled together over time to make one nation (Lotito, 1978; Muños, 1982). The history of the mosaic making up Spain, Claudio Véliz (1984:94) writes, "can be interpreted as a battle between the center and the periphery [coastal regions], between a regalist, bureaucratic, nationalistic, and relatively conservative Castilian center and cosmopolitan,

outward-looking, trading, industrious and relatively liberal periphery."

At the time of Franco's death, the young Monarch, Juan Carlos I, had to choose whether the new government should rule by suppressing the aggressive separatist tendencies in the coastal regions or rule by holding the country together through democratic means. He chose the latter path.

The Spanish reform became directed at establishing democratic processes of government through the decentralization process of devolution of power to the regions. Thus, the motivation for reform was quite different than Venezuela's goal of promoting regional economic development and administrative efficiency, or Colombia's goal of promoting national policy control and administrative efficiency. In Spain the desire to increase efficiency through decentralization was not a motivating factor. That is because Franco's centralized government, especially during his last decade, was not considered particularly inefficient.

In 1978 a new Constitution, which had been drafted over an 18 month period by collaborating representatives of the major political parties, introduced three major building blocks of change. Firstly, the 50 geographical provinces of public administration created in the Napoleonic model in 1833 were collapsed into 17 so-called comunidades autónomas (C.A.) or autonomous communities. However, in the conventional use of the terms, they were neither communities no autonomous. They were regions given measured degrees of self government. Whenever possible the provinces making up the hist territories (specifically Catalonia, Basque Country, Valencia a Galicia), with their own language, culture and historic traditi

were once again united and given their own regional identities. (Alonso, 1986).

Secondly, seventeen democratically elected regional parliaments were established which, when qualifying through Constitutional procedure, would assume a major role in controlling the affairs of the seventeen autonomous communities (Spain. Constitution, 1979). The Constitution defines those powers retained by the central government and those devolved to the governments of the autonomous communities. In this division of power, however, the Constitution hedges in favor of the State. The key articles read, "The State holds exclusive jurisdiction over the following matters" (art. 149), and "The Autonomous Community may assume jurisdiction in respect to the following matters" (art. 148) [emphasis added].

Each autonomous community has an elected parliament, thus the reins of regional governments can, and often do, reside in the hands of different political parties. The various regional sectors of government (e.g., agriculture, commerce, education) are headed by a consejero or secretary who is selected by the dominant party in a particular C.A. or by negotiation if a political coalition is controlling power.

A third key feature of the change process written into the Constitution was the fact that the 17 autonomous communities did not receive their competencias (decision-making authority with corresponding financial transfers) at the same time. A "fast track" approach under Article 151 established a simpler and faster procedure to regional devolution of power for the historic territories of Catalonia, and the Basque Country (excluding Navarra). Within these regions powerful demanding autonomy if not outright independence

forces had been at work for generations, and they had not been adverse to using violence to back up their demands. By 1983 Galicia, Andalucía, Valencia, and the Canary Islands (all territories on the periphery) had also received their competencias.

The "slow track" to assuming control, under Article 143, required extensive participation of local governing units as well as a delay of five years after the autonomous community statutes had finally been approved. These were generally the artificially created regions made up of provinces with few common historical, cultural or economic characteristics. By 1987 none of the remaining eleven autonomous communities had yet qualified to receive power or funds even though their elected parliaments had been in operation, but having authority to do very little, since the early 1980s. In these 11 autonomous communities, the Ministry of Education continued to run affairs in a centralized manner.

Ten years after the promulgation of the 1978 Constitution, the central government faced a dilemma rooted in the success of its initiatives toward change. The main goal of institutionalizing democracy throughout Spain had already been accomplished. Should the central government decentralize power and funds to the remaining 11 autonomous communities, and thus leave itself with relatively little control over national events? Or, should it retain power in these regions in order to pursue goals of national development through continued centralized control? To distribute power and funds to all the regions could fragment any unified efforts toward national development.

In April of 1987 the decision was announced that the central government would refrain from further decentralization until after the

1990 presidential elections. Thus, the six autonomous communities with devolved authority and resources would govern their affairs and the central government would continue to govern the rest of the nation.

A second, more politically motivated reason also existed for halting the decentralization process. The Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), or Spanish Socialist Workers Party, held an absolute majority in both houses at the national level and in 12 of the 17 parliaments of the autonomous communities. The PSOE party knew it would lose control of several of the regional parliaments in the non-presidential elections in June of 1987 due to a national economic crisis and a 25 percent unemployment level, the highest in Europe. Turning power and resources over to a regional parliament controlled by another party would not be a pleasant exercise.

The PSOE dominated government argued publicly that decentralization events were moving so fast that the remaining 11 autonomous communities were not yet administratively prepared to exercise control. At the same time central government officials admitted that no programs, training or otherwise, had been set up to help prepare regional officials to carry out their new responsibilities once they assumed control. In personal interviews, central government officials were quite candid in admitting that decentralizing power to the other 11 autonomous communities was not contemplated in the foreseeable future. In the June elections, two months after announcing that the decentralization process would be stopped, the PSOE party lost control over five more autonomous community parliaments.

Educational Reform

In the field of education, the Constitution reinforces the "on-

nation," concept by stipulating the same minimum requirements for all schools in the 17 autonomous communities. Controls protecting the "one nation" concept include, for example, non-university degrees may only be granted by the Ministerio de Educacion y Ciencia (MEC) or Ministry of Education, academic degrees are valid throughout the country, and a minimum amount of time must be devoted to teaching specified subjects as Spanish history and the Spanish language. If the MEC does not approve of an educational program in a region, it can withhold graduation degrees.

To insure compliance, the Constitution created the role of High Inspector. Similar to the activities of the Ministry delegado's in Colombia, the High Inspectors operate as the representatives of the MEC in each autonomous community.

The consejero, or secretary of education, reports to the president of the autonomous community legislature and manages the regional educational system through a large staff which generally parallels the staff offices and functions at the national level. The consejeria, or secretariat, basically manages the pre-university educational system. The autonomous communities are also authorized to teach the language of their region, as well as other material of regional interest.

An important feature of the devolution process in Spain is resource management. Historically, resources were gathered and spent by the central offices of government. The Constitution now provides for regional control over the educational budget, although Ministry guidelines still exist. These guidelines, however, have been significantly relaxed over the years (e.g., limits on shifting funds between budget line items) thus incrementally giving greater degrees of financial freedom to the regions.

The process of resource transfer from the State to the regions takes into account the fact that some regions are in greater economic need than others. Through the Inter-Territorial Compensation fund an attempt is made to support capital expenditures of school construction in the more needy regions. All three nations in the study have worked out similar arrangements.

Educational Reform Ten Years Later

The decentralization reform in six of the seventeen autonomous communities is a reality which successfully fulfills the expectations of the new Constitution. These regional governments, through the power sharing arrangement, manage their own educational systems, although the national guidelines must be observed.

The six autonomous communities manage their own budgets, establish priorities, hire their own personnel (except teachers who are hired through national competition and selection), and introduce their regional language (along with Spanish) into the instructional program. Has the devolution of power brought higher levels of administrative efficiency to the educational sectors of the six autonomous communities? Interestingly enough, studies on the issue do not exist in Spain. Extensive interviews, however, revealed that few senior MEC or senior autonomous community educational officials seem concerned about a goal of increasing levels of administrative efficiency. Lack of efficiency was not considered a problem before the reform, nor is it now. Pacifying the rebellious regions has been the problem, and decentralization the solution.

The success in decentralization achieved during the first 10 years is certainly not unqualified. The educational secretariats in the 11 autonomous communities without devolved authority and resources of 11

function mainly as figureheads with little to do. The MEC controls education in these regions through its provincial offices, although these offices have been delegated considerable decision-making authority in recent years.

The argument continues, should the central government decentralize authority to these remaining 11 autonomous communities as the Constitution provides (but does not require) to establish a democracy that has already been secured? Or, should the central government retain administrative control and shape the educational system into a coordinated engine of national development?

Other organizational difficulties were in evidence ten years after the reform began. For example, coordinated educational planning between the MEC and the educational systems of the six autonomous communities with competencias practically did not exist. A Ministry planning unit was first established in 1981 with the appointment of a one person office. Senior ministry officials explained that national planning has a bad image in Spain because under Franco it tended to be used as a tool of centralized, authoritarian control. A national educational planning effort would be looked upon with hostility by the historic territories as an attempt at intervention into their newly gained regional autonomy.

Coordinated efforts in the field of education between the 17 autonomous communities or between the six decentralized autonomous communities and the MEC were noticeably absent. The limited coordination that did exist was based on periodic personal contact between the Minister of Education and the six autonomous community educational leaders.

At the core of the problem in establishing close working

relationships between the Ministry of Education and the leadership of the historic territories is the long standing distrust the peripheral regions have for the central government, and vice versa (Hernández and Mercadé, 1986).

Officials in Madrid have deep seeded anxieties that the historic territories will one day mobilize in a genuine movement for their independence from Spain. In the historic territories there are deep seeded anxieties that the national government will one day again try to stamp out regional, cultural and political identities.

The tension between officials representing the Ministry and those representing the peripheral regions showed up in an interesting pattern in numerous interviews. Senior Ministry officials tended to point to the considerable decision-making authority the historic regions now have that did not exist before the new Constitution. Regional officials, on the other hand, tended to argue that the decision-making authority they now have is limited to managing policy set at the national level. In addition, these officials argued that over 80 percent of the budget is in fixed expenditures, and that this leaves little financial freedom of choice. The Constitutional "minimums" reserved for nation-wide issues leave almost no room for regional curricular material they contended.

In other words, the Ministry personnel point to all that can be done in the regions now that could never be done in the past, and the regional officials point to all that could be done if the Ministry would leave them alone. Metaphorically speaking, the Ministry personnel argued that the glass is half full and in the regions the secretariat personnel argued that it is half empty.

Interestingly enough, the same claims that the regional

educational officials made against the center regarding continued control, the local educators tended to make against the regional educational officials. The decentralized authority and resources in the six autonomous communities have not been passed on to the local level.

In short, as Manuel de Puelles (1986:481) writes, "the transition has not only been a change in rule - from authoritarianism to democracy -- but also a profound change in Spanish society...." Nowhere is this more evident than in the Spanish system of public education where six of the 17 autonomous communities basically manage their own educational affairs within a nation now firmly rooted in democracy. Although certainly not perfect, within the context of a national democratization effort, the educational system had made significant progress toward its reform goals.

The question remains, however, will the Spanish decentralization strategy in education eventually be able to promote greater administrative efficiency and facilitate national economic development, or will it break down into a multitude of uncoordinated regional actions by the autonomous communities acting in their own self interest? Also, to what extent will the already existing problems of coordination between autonomous communities be exacerbated if other political parties win control over more and more of the regional parliaments from the still dominant PSOE party? Certainly the final chapter on the Spanish decentralization reform will not be written for years to come.

Conclusions and Implications

Venezuela, Colombia and Spain each followed distinct strategies of decentralization at the end of dictatorial regimes. Venezuela

developed a strategy of delegation and deconcentration in all ministries of government, including education, within the framework of eight newly created regions. The goal was national development through the creation of strong regional growth poles administered regionally in an efficient and effective manner.

Colombia pursued a strategy of delegating administrative authority to already existing state [department] governments, but at the same time recentralizing the power of policy formation which had been illicitly usurped by the states. Thus the principal goal was for education to support national development more effectively through greater efficiency and more effective control from the top.

Spain pursued a strategy of quasi-devolution of decision-making authority, in education and other government sectors, to 17 newly created, semi-autonomous regional governments. The principal goals were to institutionalize democracy and provide for semi self-rule, especially in rebellious historic regions of the nation.

Ten years after its decentralization efforts began, Spain and Colombia had demonstrated considerable success toward achieving their goals while Venezuela had not. There are at least eight principal reasons why this is the case.

(1) <u>Collaboration.</u> In Spain and Colombia the dominant political parties were generally able to make political compromises on critical issues of reform policy and execution when the welfare of the nation was at stake. In Colombia the presidency rotated between two major political parties which shared all political appointments. In Spain the major parties collaborated in drafting the new Constitution and supporting its intent. In Venezuela the major parties time and again rejected collaborative reform solutions in favor "their own reform

program or no one else's"

(2) Political Party Politics. The ability to compromise generally led to lower levels of politicization in policy, programs and personnel appointments in the entire educational system of Spain and at the Ministry (national) level in Colombia. The state-level educational systems of Colombia and the entire educational system of Venezuela were still politicized extensively 10 years later.

(3) Incremental approaches. By decentralizing in stages, Spain and Colombia had the time and opportunity to experiment and make adjustments in the original design. Venezuela, on the other hand, developed an "all-at-once" strategy that proved very difficult to integrate and execute.

(4) Continuity. In Venezuela as governments changed (as they did four times between 1968 and 1982), existing programs and thousands of personnel were dropped in favor of new programs and personnel stressing the priorities of the new government. Consequently, with regard to reform issues, every four years was like starting over. In Spain and Colombia reform programs as well as skilled and experienced personnel tended to be retained thus permitting a visible measure of developmental growth.

(5) Costs. In Venezuela during the oil boom years, problems of continuity were exacerbated by the impression that money was no object. No matter how many millions of dollars and man-hours had already been expended on special development programs, they could be sacrificed to the needs of an incoming administration. In Spain, when 17 regional governments were set up to institutionalize democracy, money was not an object. Ten years later during an economic crisis, but with democracy already in place, regional budget deficits played a

significant role in not decentralizing authority to the 11 remaining regions. Colombia, on the other hand, was poor and money was always an object. Each new national government was careful to build on what the past government had created in education, thus significant administrative development took place.

(6) Budget Control. In Spain and Colombia resource management was decentralized to the regions while in Venezuela it wasn't. Thus, in Venezuela regional decision making regarding personnel appointments and financial expenditures in support of regional development could not occur to any meaningful extent.

(7) Regional Boundaries. In Spain and Venezuela new regional boundaries were created to encompass the social and economic requirements of territorial modernization while still attempting to preserve cultural continuity. In Colombia, the historic state boundaries were retained leaving immense social and economic incongruities between them and miring the educational decision making process in the existing political machinery of the highly politicized state governments.

(8) Formalization. In Colombia and Venezuela the organization and management structures of the educational systems were not strong and well institutionalized. That is, informal procedures, strong personalities, and personal contacts often dominated the processes of decision making, hiring and program execution. In effect, the formal system of operation as written in the laws and Ministry regulations often had no relationship to how the system actually operated. Thus, when these ministries wrote new policy or sent out directives, they could never really be assured that the stipulated actions would be taken. In Spain, however, the organization and management system was

very institutionalized. Typically, what was written in law and policy would be in effect in the field. Thus, change initiatives were much easier to carry out.

In sum, ten years after the end of dictatorships the nations of Spain, Colombia and Venezuela were pursuing their own style of decentralization with differing degrees of success. A lesson from all three countries would be that changing the centralized patterns of the past is not easy. However, the cases of Colombia and Spain illustrate that change is certainly possible.

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Endnote 1

A standard field research methodology was employed by the writer in all three countries (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984; Hanson, 1981). When studying the reforms in Colombia and Venezuela, the writer gathered data on various occasions between 1965 and 1982 in the capacities of an assistant professor of a Colombian University, a Senior Fulbright Research Scholar, a UCLA visiting scholar, and a World Bank consultant. Data were gathered in Spain in 1987 while on sabbatical from the University of California, Riverside. Permission in advance had been received from all three national ministries and the fullest cooperation was provided. In all three countries hundreds of interviews were conducted from teachers in the classroom to the top ranks of the ministries. In addition, thousands of pages of published and unpublished documents were gathered, reviewed and analyzed.

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